

Conclusions

Cigarette disease is now the foremost preventable cause of death in the United States. For the American male, ages 35-65, who smokes a pack or more of cigarettes per day, tobacco is an environmental hazard equal to all other hazards to life combined.

The extraordinary magnitude and pervasive nature of the cigarette disease problem challenges every person, truly concerned with personal and community health, to do all he can, by personal example and as a community leader, to abate this foremost threat to the public health.

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REIMERT T. RAVENHOLT, M.D., M.P.H.
Associate Professor of Preventive Medicine,
University of Washington School of Medicine,
Seattle, Wash.

TO THE EDITOR:

In Dr. Horace L. Sipple's article "Combating Nutrition Misinformation Through Coordinated Programs" (May, 1964) it is stated that "... our task has been to bring documented truths about food and nutrition to the average person in a form he can understand" and then "... the public has not learned to be skeptical about nutrition nonsense." but that "... the FDA can control labeling."

Some data relevant to Dr. Sipple's statements have recently been taken. As part of an evaluation survey the following questions were asked of a random sample of diabetic patients attending the Boston City Hospital Diabetes Clinic. Forty patients were asked:

Which Food Is Better for You When You Have Diabetes? Why?

Q 1. fresh fruit or dietetic canned fruit?

A. fresh—17 dietetic cn—21
no difference—2

Reasons given for dietetic cn.:

no sugar, sugar free, no calories, have
all you want=17
no answer=2

Q 2. dietetic canned vegetables or fresh vegetables?

A. fresh—26 dietetic cn.—14

Reasons for dietetic cn.:

no sugar, good for diabetics, made
esp. for diabetics=11
contains less salt=2
no answer=1

Q 3. 1 tsp. butter or 1 tsp. margarine?

A. butter—9 margarine—21
no difference—4

Reasons for margarine:

less fat, no calories, no fat=15
low in animal fat, corn oil is better=3
no answer=3

Q 4. 1 tsp. margarine or 1 tsp. unsalted margarine

A. unsalted=32 regular=2
depends on condition=2

Reasons for unsalted:

salt makes sugar, salt is bad for
diabetics=6
salt is fattening=3
salt is bad for you=6
retains water, used for high blood
pressure, use for heart trouble=8
no answer=17

The answers to these questions rather pointedly indicate that one of the central issues involved in nutrition misinformation is the vague and complicated state of the labels on dietetic foods. The ratio between dietetic foods containing vague labels and nutritionists or nutrition educators is too high to depend on the latter for "documenting truths about food and nutrition to the average person in a form he can understand."

The proposed revision of the FDA labeling laws concerning dietetic foods should have the attention and the strong support of the coordinated programs mentioned in Dr. Sipple's article. As these labels and laws now stand they only continue to breed untruths and misinformation, in which even a skep-

tical public would find it hard to judge sense from nonsense.

CAROL SPINDELL FARKAS, B.S., M.Ed.

Nutritionist, Canfield Road, Convent Station,
N. J.

TO THE EDITOR:

Food products should certainly be labeled clearly and accurately. The FDA has worked most effectively to achieve this, and undoubtedly will continue its efforts. A most important point, which is supported by the responses reported by Mrs. Farkas, is that more sound nutrition information must reach the public to provide an understanding of what is meant by good nutrition.

This requires continuing educational programs as well as accurate labeling. Her survey underlines the fact that more effective nutrition education is needed at every level, through all the media we can reach.

HORACE L. SIPPLE

Executive Secretary and Treasurer,
The Nutrition Foundation, Inc.,
New York, N. Y.

Journals Wanted

The Association is urgently in need of January, February, and March, 1964, Journals. If there are any readers who have no further need of their copies, the Association would be grateful if these were returned to headquarters at 1790 Broadway, New York, N. Y. 10019.